



WSET

*WSET Level 2
Award in Spirits*

A world of knowledge
wsetglobal.com



Orientation

- the building, fire evacuation, where to eat

Study materials

- textbook, workbook, SAT card, specification

Classroom time

- overview, punctuality, etiquette

Private study

- preparation, revision

Overview of classroom sessions

Day 1

1. an introduction to tasting
2. key principles of spirits production
3. fruit spirits

Day 2

4. whisky/whiskey
 5. sugar cane spirits
 6. Tequila and Mezcal
- mock test

Day 3

7. vodka
 8. flavoured spirits and aromatised wines
 9. mixing with spirits
- examination

Overview of classroom sessions

1. an introduction to tasting
2. key principles of spirits production
3. fruit spirits
4. whisky/whiskey
5. sugar cane spirits
6. Tequila and Mezcal
mock test
7. vodka
8. flavoured spirits and aromatised wines
9. mixing with spirits
examination

Duration

- 1 hour

Questions

- 50 multiple-choice questions

Marks

- 55% = pass
- 70% = pass with merit
- 85% = pass with distinction

Session 1

An introduction to tasting

An overview of spirits production

raw material



spirit

- ① processing the raw material ✓
- ② alcoholic fermentation ✓
- ③ distillation
- ④ post-distillation operations ✓

Preparing for a tasting

Tasting environment

- good natural light
- free of strong odours
- spittoons, spit cups

Preparing yourself

- clean palate, well hydrated
- no scented products
- clean, suitable glassware

Approach to tasting spirits

Recommended method

- pour 1.5 cL (0.5 US fl. oz.) spirit
- assess the appearance and nose
- dilute the sample with 1.5 cL (0.5 US fl. oz.) of water
- reassess the nose
- assess the palate

APPEARANCE

Clarity

clear – hazy

Intensity

water-white – pale – medium – deep – opaque

Colour

colourless – lemon – gold – amber – brown

pink – red – orange – yellow – green – blue – purple – black

Other observations

e.g. louching

- appearance tells you nothing about a spirit's quality or maturity
- louching is the formation of a cloudy suspension when water is added to an aniseed spirit

Assessing the nose

- there is no need to swirl the spirit to release aromas
- sniff the spirit cautiously so as not to overwhelm your nose

Faults

- 'out of condition' is the most common fault

NOSE	
Condition	clean – unclean
Aroma intensity	neutral – light – medium – pronounced
Aroma characteristics	e.g. raw material, processing, oak and maturation

Aroma types

- raw material
- processing (raw material, fermentation, distillation)
- oak and maturation

Three senses

- taste
- smell
- touch

Two aims

- describe the flavours and their persistence
- describe the feel of the spirit in the mouth

PALATE

Sweetness (sugar level) dry – off-dry – medium – sweet

Texture e.g. rough, smooth, watery, mouthfilling, warming

Flavour intensity neutral – light – medium – pronounced

Flavour characteristics e.g. raw material, processing, oak and maturation

Finish length short – medium – long

nature neutral – simple – some complexity – very complex

APPEARANCE		
Clarity		clear – hazy
Intensity		water-white – pale – medium – deep – opaque
Colour		colourless – lemon – gold – amber – brown
		pink – red – orange – yellow – green – blue – purple – brown – black
Other observations		e.g. louching
NOSE		
Condition		clean – unclean
Intensity		neutral – light – medium – pronounced
Aroma characteristics		e.g. raw material, processing, oak and maturation
PALATE		
Sweetness (sugar level)		dry – off-dry – medium – sweet
Texture		e.g. rough, smooth, watery, mouthfilling, warming
Flavour intensity		neutral – light – medium – pronounced
Flavour characteristics		e.g. raw material, processing, oak and maturation
Finish	length	short – medium – long
	nature	neutral – simple – some complexity – very complex
CONCLUSIONS		
Quality level		faulty – poor – acceptable – good – very good – outstanding

CONCLUSIONS

Quality level faulty – poor – acceptable – good – very good – outstanding

Quality criteria

- **balance** (aroma and texture)
- **length and intensity**
- **complexity and purity**
- **expressiveness**